

STARTING ON A HILL

It is more difficult to start the motorcycle moving on an upgrade than on flat ground. There is always the danger of rolling backwards into a vehicle behind you. Here are some important tips to remember when starting on a hill:

- Use the front brake to hold the motorcycle while you start the engine and shift into first gear.
- Change to the foot brake to hold the motorcycle while you operate the throttle with your right hand.
- Open the throttle a little bit for more power.
- Gradually ease out the clutch.
- Release the foot brake when the engine begins to slow down. This means the engine is taking hold.
- Continue to release the clutch gradually. If you release it too quickly, the front wheel may come off the ground, the engine may stop, or both.

AVOIDING COLLISIONS

A safe and responsible rider significantly reduces the risk of being injured in an accident by riding defensively. As a rider, you cannot be certain that motor vehicle drivers will be aware of your presence. Riding defensively incorporates rider preparation, communication, and caution. To lessen your chances of being in an accident:

- Be visible - wear proper clothing, always use your headlight, and ride in the best lane position.
- Communicate your intentions - use the proper signals, brake light, and lane position.
- Maintain an adequate space cushion - following, being followed, lane sharing, passing, and being passed.
- Scan 10 to 15 seconds ahead of your path of travel.
- Identify potential hazards or conflicts and consider your escape options before they develop.
- Be prepared to act - remain alert and know how to carry out proper accident avoidance skills.

BE VISIBLE

In crashes involving motorcycles, motor vehicle drivers often cite the lack of rider visibility as the leading cause of the accident. Both from ahead and from behind, a motorcycle's outline is much smaller than that of other motor vehicles. Therefore, even if a motor vehicle driver recognizes your presence, you are not necessarily safe. Often it is easy for motor vehicle drivers to mistake a rider's distance and speed because smaller vehicles appear farther away and seem to be traveling slower than they actually are. A rider can take several measures to help motor vehicle drivers recognize their presence on the road.

CLOTHING

Most accidents involving motorcycles occur during the daylight hours. The use of brightly colored clothing and reflective tape on motorcycle helmets and equipment helps make riders more noticeable. Selecting bright orange, red, yellow, and green jackets or vests will increase rider visibility. Should you choose to not wear any brightly colored clothing, consider a reflective vest which will alert drivers of your presence.

HEADLIGHT

The best way to alert motor vehicle drivers of your presence on a motorcycle is to keep the headlight on at all times. Research shows that during daylight hours a motorcycle with its headlights on becomes twice as noticeable to oncoming drivers. Riders should consider using their motorcycle's high-beam lights during daylight hours for added visibility.

BRAKE LIGHT

A motorcycle's brake light is usually not as noticeable as the brake lights on an automobile, particularly if the motorcycle's tail light is on. Flashing your brake lights before slowing or stopping will help alert fellow drivers of your intentions. It is especially important to flash your brake lights if being followed too closely ("tailgated".) Often a tailgater is focused solely on your motorcycle and may be unaware of a road hazard ahead. Use caution at locations where a motor vehicle driver might not expect a rider to turn, slow, or stop.

COMMUNICATING YOUR INTENTIONS

The signals used by a motorcycle rider are similar to those used by a motor vehicle operator. Signals are important as they communicate to others traveling on the road what your intentions are. Coupled with a rider's added vulnerability, signals take on even greater significance. Riders should also be familiar with hand signals and routinely incorporate both manual and electronic signals as part of their riding strategy.



TURN SIGNALS

Turn signals perform two essential functions:

1. Turn signals alert fellow drivers of what your intentions are. It is recommended that a rider always use turn signals when changing lanes, even when a vehicle may not be present.
2. Turn signals help make a motorcycle rider more visible. A driver traveling behind you is more likely to see a turn signal than a taillight.

It is good practice to use turn signals, even when planning to do the obvious, for it allows drivers to react accordingly. Failing to cancel your turn signal can be as problematic as not activating it. A turn signal left blinking is dangerous and may cause a driver anticipating a turn to enter your path of travel. Check your instrument panel to determine whether your turn signal has been properly canceled.

HORN

A motorcycle horn is helpful in getting the attention of another motor vehicle operator or pedestrian. Motorcycle riders should be prepared to use their horn in the event of an emergency. Horn use is also recommended when the ability to safely pass a motor vehicle entering your lane of travel is in question. A motorcycle rider should be ready to stop or swerve from danger in the following situations:

- A driver in the adjacent lane is quickly approaching another vehicle and may attempt to overtake or pass the rider.
- A driver opening the door of a parked motor vehicle threatens rider safety.
- A pedestrian walking or bicyclist riding in the street.

POSITION

Size can work to the advantage of the motorcycle rider. Unlike motor vehicle operators who have few options as to the position of their vehicle within a lane of travel, motorcycle riders can properly position the cycle to heighten visibility. Each marked traffic lane gives a motorcycle rider three distinct paths of travel, as illustrated in the image to the right. To maximize the chances of being seen, a motorcycle rider should:

- Avoid traveling in another vehicle's "blind spot." When passing a motor vehicle, get through the driver's blind spot as quickly as possible. Make the determination early whether to pass the motor vehicle or to drop back. Approach the motor vehicle with caution, and once alongside, speed up and pass quickly.
- Take a position that enables a motor vehicle traveling ahead the opportunity to spot you with the use of vehicle mirrors. Use a combination of lane positioning and vehicle lighting to assist fellow motorists in recognizing your motorcycle.
- When parking a motorcycle, position or angle the motorcycle so that drivers can be aware of its presence. Efforts to enhance motorcycle visibility will reduce the risk of being unnecessarily struck or injured by a motorist unaware of your presence.



Lane Position



Blind Spots



Following



Parking at curb